

*AMHERST TOMORROW  
PLANNING OUR FUTURE TOGETHER*

***DRAFT – 17 April 2007***

**VISIONING WORKSHOP  
SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANT RESPONSE**



Approximately 55 people (including 15 Committee members) attended the Visioning Workshop held at the Amherst Middle School on Tuesday March 27, 2006 from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

***Purpose:*** The purpose of the workshop was “To invite the Amherst community to come together and generate ideas that will create a shared vision for Amherst’s future. This in turn will be used as the foundation for an action plan that will outline the steps necessary to attain this vision.”

***Process:*** Participants were asked to view maps and other information before the session commenced. The Consultants presented a brief Power Point presentation describing the process and the reasons for completing a master plan. The majority of the workshop was devoted to small discussion groups. Participants were divided into four groups where Committee members facilitated discussions; the same questions were asked of all groups. Finally a representative from each of the small groups was asked to present highlights of their groups’ discussions.

The following is a summary of the groups collective responses, followed by a more detailed documentation of each group’s comments. A vision statement was crafted from the key elements participants agreed should be part of the town’s future.

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**KEY ELEMENTS TO INCLUDE IN A SHARED VISION OF  
AMHERST'S FUTURE**

- Enhance sense of place and community pride by preserving the character of Amherst defined as/by:
  - Normal Rockwell
  - The Village
  - Rural
  - New England colonial
  - Small town feel
  - Patriotic spirit
  - Family focus
  - Local businesses (e.g. Moulton's)
  - Quiet
  - Joe English Nature Reserve
  - Hot air balloons
  - The Library
- Preserve rural character
  - Farm and agricultural land
  - Stone walls and picket fences
  - Low density development
  - Trails with the smell of pine wood
  - Wildlife
- Preserve historic character
  - New England colonial architectural/historic features
  - The Village – that lives and works
  - Village Green
- Continue conservation efforts and preservation of natural resources
  - Joe English
  - Tree-shaded country roads creating tree tunnels
  - Acquire open space
- Continue town-wide activities and community holiday celebrations
  - July 4<sup>th</sup>, Memorial Day, Tree Lighting, Halloween
  - Build a band stand and have free concerts
  - Better publicize and coordinate community activities
- Make Amherst more walkable and bikeable
  - Sidewalks
  - Trails

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- Create a system of connected walking/biking trails
- Continue to support excellence in the public schools
- Provide additional opportunities for recreation.
  - Teens – e.g. skatepark, Boys and Girls Club
  - Adults
  - Seniors
  - Improve swimming and skating facilities
  - Increase usage of Baboosic Lake
- Improve transportation in and around town
  - Repair roads
  - Enforce speed limits
  - Re-route trucks
  - Improve signage
  - Reduce individual driving to school – use buses
- Control growth and development
  - Reduce residential development
  - Control aesthetics of development on Rt. 101A
  - Acquire open space
  - Improve aesthetics in residential and commercial developments
  - Preserve current separation of residential and commercial uses.
- Provide more community gathering places
  - Community center
  - Parks
  - Teen Center
  - Senior Center
  - Better utilize the Town Common
  - In the town center
- Explore ways of providing affordable housing
  - Fixed income elderly
  - Young adults
- Increase the tax base
  - Preserve separation of commercial/industrial development from residential
  - Develop clean and aesthetically pleasing commercial/office activities
  - Address infrastructure needs
- Increase resident participation in town governance
  - Support volunteerism

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- Outreach to civic groups
- Bring back Town Meeting
- Overcome resident apathy

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## VISION STATEMENT

Crafting a vision statement is a way of understanding and describing the desired future as envisioned by a group of people. “Imagine...” and “Amherst will...” are ways of describing how the town would be if the desired future is attained. An action plan will be developed based on this vision. The plan will outline steps necessary to reach the shared vision.

The following vision statement represents a compilation of ideas suggested by the participants who attended the visioning workshop who contributed the elements of a desired future for the town. The elements included in the visioning statement represent those around which relative consensus was reached and/or seemed consistent with other thoughts as outlined by the workshop participants.

***IMAGINE AMHERST**, a community that prides itself on its **sense of place**, preserving its character by enhancing those features that make it unique. These include the historic Village with its lovely Village Green, New England colonial architecture, a rural, small town feel with a family focus and a patriotic spirit, local businesses and a quiet, Norman Rockwell quality to the way of life.*

*Amherst will preserve its **rural character** by preserving its farm and agricultural land, stone walls and picket fences. Low density residential development kept separate from commercial areas will help to retain the small town feeling. The preservation of **natural resources**, including open land and wildlife corridors will be a top priority. Joe English and other conservation lands will continue to be appreciated and the town will acquire additional open space for preservation.*

*The preservation of Amherst’s **historic features** will also be a priority. This includes the colonial architecture, the Village Green and a living and working historic center that accommodates residents’ needs.*

*Amherst will continue to bring its residents together by holding town-wide holiday celebrations and by organizing additional events such as concerts. The Town will also provide more places and spaces for the **community to gather** such as a community center, teen center, and senior center as well as by better utilizing the Town Common and by creating more parks.*

*Imagine Amherst as a place where getting in and around town is easy and pleasant with sidewalks and a system of connected **walking and biking trails** linking conservation lands and other places of interest. **Vehicular transportation** will also be easier by making improvements such as repairing roads, enforcing speed limits, improving signage and re-routing trucks.*

*The Town will continue to provide good public services and to support excellence in the public **schools**.*

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*Imagine Amherst with a variety of opportunities for **recreation** including activities for teens and seniors as well as adults, expanding the offerings to include a wider choice. In addition to athletics these may include improved facilities at Baboosic Lake, improved skating and swimming options and a skatepark for teens.*

*Imagine Amherst with the necessary tools in place to **control growth and development** so that residential and commercial activities remain separate, aesthetics of both residential and commercial developments are guided so that they are in keeping with the Town's historic look and open space is acquired so as to preserve the town's rural character.*

*Amherst will make these improvements and become an even more appealing place to live. The Town will simultaneously find a way to provide **housing** that is **affordable** to the elderly who wish to age in place and young adults who would like to live in the Town.*

*In order to pay for some of the improvements mentioned above, the Town will need to increase its **tax base**. If there is any additional commercial development it should be clean, continue to remain separate from residential areas, and should be carefully guided by design guidelines. Additional infrastructure needs will also need to be addressed.*

*Amherst will **engage** more of its **citizenry** in town governance and decision-making by exploring the option of bringing back Town Meeting, conducting outreach to civic groups and by continuing to support volunteerism. The Town will make an effort to involve more of its residents in decision-making and will keep residents aware of efforts to make improvements by providing information to its citizens through the web, cable TV, and other means of **communication**.*

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## **SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP RESPONSES**

Shared Elements. The following are the most frequent responses to the questions asked of the small group participants.

### **Favorite Things about Amherst**

Schools  
Small rural nature  
Sense of pride/history  
Sense of community  
Library  
Environmental/conservation efforts  
Village/historic area  
Separation of residential and commercial areas  
Recreation  
Volunteerism  
Family focus

### **Least Favorite Things about Amherst**

Road Systems and Traffic  
Limited number of walking/biking trails  
Tax burden  
Overdevelopment of Rt. 101A  
Lack of control over land development  
No recreation center  
Growth rate  
Loss of aesthetics in new developments

### **Amherst Character**

Traditional holiday spirit  
Rural beauty  
Old New England colonial character  
Local businesses  
The Village  
Town's People  
Schools and recreational athletic programs  
American flag  
Norman Rockwell

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**Ideas from Other Places for improving Amherst**

Biking and walking trails  
Recreation/athletic center  
Community center  
Parks  
Free concerts

**Obstacles to Change**

Money  
Real estate interests  
Property taxes  
Lack of consensus  
Lack of availability of citizen time  
Apathy  
Transitional population  
Lack of community commitment  
Zoning  
Lack of commercial zone  
Resistance to change

**Strategies**

Use of web  
Volunteerism  
Educate residents and market the master plan

**One thing to Improve Amherst**

Bring back Town Meeting  
Conserve open space  
Bike/foot paths  
Build a recreation center  
Preserve heritage  
Stricter zoning ordinances  
Build a diner adjacent to the Village Green (for the purpose of providing community gathering and vitality to the center)  
Stricter commercial design standards  
Greater community involvement  
Provide affordable housing



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**SUMMARY OF MAJORITY PARTICIPANT RESPONSES**

Each of the four groups were asked the following questions:

- *“What are your favorite things about Amherst (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)?”*
- *“What are your least favorite things about Amherst (that you feel are important to change in the future)?”*
- *“What words and/or images would you use to describe Amherst’s character?”*
- *“Think about other towns you have visited (or even seen in a movie, heard or read about) and share some ideas that you think could be relevant to making Amherst a better place to live.”*
- *“What are some potential obstacles to positive change as you see them?”*
- *“What are some strategies for getting “there” (to where you would like Amherst to be)?”*
- *“If you could do one thing to improve Amherst, what would it be?”*

The following is a summary of participant responses presented so that the most frequently given responses, that is, what most people agreed on, is presented first. The number of groups in which the comment was made is also noted.

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## **DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF GROUP RESPONSES**

1. “What are your favorite things about Amherst (that you would want to ensure be preserved in the future)”?

<b><i>Response</i></b>	<b><i>Comments</i></b>	<b><i># of groups</i></b>	<b><i># of dots<sup>1</sup></i></b>
Schools	<i>Attract new residents</i>	4	32
Small rural nature	<i>Natural beauty, farm &amp; agricultural land</i>	4	29
Sense of pride/history	<i>Sense of place, sense of pride/history</i>	3	19
Sense of community	<i>Small community feel, warm, small town America, spirit</i>	3	16
Library		3	13
Environmental efforts	<i>Conservation land (Joe English, PMEC) Conservation &amp; access to land</i>	2	12
Village, historic area	<i>Feeling, and look</i>	3	11
Separation of residential and commercial areas		1	11
Recreation	<i>Usability, good Rec Department</i>	2	10
Volunteerism		2	9
Family focus	<i>People, children</i>	2	9
Larger lots		1	6
Low population		1	6
Safe feeling		3	5
Trees	<i>Tree-shaded country roads; tree tunnels</i>	1	5
Dark night skies		1	4
Activities	<i>July 4<sup>th</sup>, Tree Lighting, Halloween</i>	2	4
Wildlife		2	3
Animals in village		1	3
Dump	<i>Swap shop</i>	1	3
Openness, variety -open space	<i>Not cookie cutter (except for developments)</i>	1	2
Spirit of innovation		1	2
Moulton's		1	2
Architecture	<i>Historic aesthetics</i>	2	1

<sup>1</sup> All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and “vote” on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item.

One of the four groups received the directions slightly incorrectly: they were asked to use only three dots. Later they were given two additional, but this may have caused a slight skew in their responses.

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Quiet		<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Public safety agencies		<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Low traffic volumes	<i>On rural roads</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Fire Department	<i>Up to date</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Commercial center	<i>Out of town</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Community TV		<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>
Youth activities		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Amherst Citizen of the Year		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Demographic variety			<i>0</i>
You can fight “city hall”			<i>0</i>
Likes neighborhood			<i>0</i>
People	<i>Very genuine, thoughtful, preserving community</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Working livable village		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Music and Theater		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Souhegan River		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
Cemetery fields	<i>And playgrounds</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>

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2. “What are your least favorite things about Amherst (that you feel are important to change in the future)?”

<i><b>Response</b></i>	<i><b>Comments</b></i>	<i><b># of group s</b></i>	<i><b># of dots<sup>2</sup></b></i>
Road systems & traffic	<i>Repairs needed, overall layout, speed, Rt. 101, Rt. 101A, overall infrastructure, poor signage, less driving to school (too many buses), truck rolling through town</i>	4	31
Limited # of walking/biking paths	<i>Sidewalks, community trails, bike trails</i>	4	27
Property/school tax burden	<i>Financial structure &amp; lack of revenue stream to relieve it Displacing fixed income residents</i>	3	24
Overdevelopment of Rt. 101A	<i>Visual pollution, uncertain future, lack of development standards, too much commercial development</i>	3	20
Lack of effective safeguards to enforce control of land development	<i>Too much residential development</i>	2	18
No recreational center	<i>Skate park</i>	1	10
Cost of residency	<i>Taxes, additional cost of services not covered by municipality, building cost of housing, etc.</i>	1	9
Growth rate		1	7
Loss of aesthetics	<i>In developments</i>	1	7
Lack of diversity		1	6
Lack of opportunity for younger adults	<i>Jobs, housing</i>	1	5
Commercial dev. on aquifer		1	5
More people need to get involved		1	5
Lack of impact fees		1	5
Senior services	<i>Not sufficient</i>	1	4
Upkeep of infrastructure		1	4
Lack of water resource protection		1	4
Generational divide		1	4
5 <sup>th</sup> grades at middle school		1	3
Hunting & residential conflicts		1	3

<sup>2</sup> All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and “vote” on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item.

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Tension b/w historic character & town center improvements		1	3
Lack of support for school improvements	<i>Functional &amp; physical depreciation</i>	1	3
Lack of support for rec facilities		1	3
Need a better sense of community		1	3
Transfer station traffic		1	2
Substance abuse by kids		1	2
No nice playgrounds	<i>For kids</i>	1	2
Lack of public transportation		1	1
No central info board		1	1
Parking in village		1	0
No trash pickup		1	0
Town's name	<i>Lord Jeffrey Amherst advocated eliminating Native Americans via smallpox/genocide using infected blankets</i>	1	0
Clear cutting of land	<i>When development is done</i>	1	0
Dog walkers are not easily seen		1	0
Cemetery Field		1	0
Late night/delayed plowing		1	0
Current management of Lindabury Orchard		1	0
High density developments	<i>PDRs</i>	1	0
Cell towers that look like trees		1	0
Minimize tax base while minimizing growth/expansion		1	0
Quality of education		1	0
Lack of environmental protection		1	0

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3. *“What words and/or images would you use to describe Amherst’s character?”*  
(**Brainstorm**)

<b>Response</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b># of groups (out of 4)</b>
Traditional Holiday spirit	July 4 <sup>th</sup> , Memorial Day, Tree	4
Rural beauty	farms	3
Old New England colonial character	Historical	3
Local businesses	Moulton’s	3
The Village	Village green, mixed use rural village	3
Town’s People	Friendly, thoughtful, caring	3
Schools and rec athletic programs	Easy access to recreation	2
American flag	Patriotic	2
Norman Rockwell		2
Community pride		1
Library		1
Joe English (PMEC)		1
Garden Club		1
Congregational church		1
Stone walls		1
Picket fences		1
Wetlands		1
Town Meeting		1
Patrician		1
Changing		1
Complacent		1
Trails with the smell of pine wood		1
Town Dump		1
Souhegan River		1
Greenway		1
Yankee		1
Lack of dense development		1
Hot air balloons		1
Open community	Less regulation and lower cost	1
Baboosic Lake	Used to have Pavillion, lots of town activities	1

**DOES NOT DESCRIBE AMHERST’S CHARACTER**

- Cosmopolitan
- Crime (3)
- Pollution
- Big box stores
- Sound pollution
- Traffic congestion

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- Sub-divisions, cookie cutter developments (2)
- Large trucks going through the village
- Lack of cultural diversity, warped demographic – lots of older people & young families, less in the middle (2)
- Technically challenged – weak internet infrastructure
- “Disney-ized” village center
- commercialization of 101
- limited access on Rt. 101
- Rt. 101A

- 
4. *“Think about other towns you have visited (or even seen in a movie, heard or read about) and share some ideas that you think could be relevant to making Amherst a better place to live.” (Brainstorm)*

Response	Comments	# of groups (out of 4)
Biking and walking trails	More pedestrian/bike friendly Shoulder improvements Non-auto travel lanes to connect zones Greenways – multi-modal – bikes, pedestrians and maybe horses, nothing motorized	4
Recreation/athletic center	Better recreation. More fields/playgrounds Structures for recreation Multi-use rec facility	3
Community center	Especially for elderly & teens	3
Parks	With trees	2
Free concerts	To build sense of community Band stand	2
Baboosic Lake	Used beyond summer boating	1
Winter Pond for skating/hockey		1
Boys and Girls Club		1
Skate Park		1
Better utilization of Town Common		1
Gateway	Into town	1
Community meeting place	In town center	1
Brick paving of town center walkways		1
More aesthetic development	Commercial development	1
Basketball courts		1
Better swimming & skating facilities		1
Marketing & coordination	Community activities	1

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Town meeting		1
Mandated sustainable development		1
Fiber network		1
Community appearance standards		1
Mesh community	Wireless	1

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*5. “What are some potential obstacles to positive change as you see them?”*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b># of groups (out of 4)</b>
Money		3
Desire for revenue through development	Competing self interests & individual agendas Real estate interests leading the town	3
Property taxes /regressive	Lack of state tax policy: no broad base tax; reliance on property tax	3
Lack of consensus		3
Availability of citizen time	People’s busy schedules, stress	3
Apathy		3
Transitional population	Stay 3-4 years, then move	2
Lack of community commitment	Lack of participation	2
Zoning	As written to control commercial development	2
Lack of commercial zone	Lack of commercial/industrial tax base	2
School taxes	Lack of state educational support	2
Resistance to change	Preconceptions	2
Bureaucracy		1
Vendor license to use town common		1
Lack of land within 5 mile radius of town center		1
Lack of vested interest		1
Available land		1
People not understanding each other		1
Private property rights		1
Developer pressure		1
No plan/road map		1
Unwilling to tax & spend		1
Lack of experienced leaders		1
Lack of mentorship program	Opportunities for new generation of leaders	1
Bedroom community		1
Lack of infrastructure		1
Lack of public transportation		1



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6. “What are some strategies for getting “there” (to where you would like Amherst to be)?”

<b>Response</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b># of groups (out of 4)</b>
Use of web	Amherst Talks (web site) Continue website interaction Internet Town Meeting	3
Volunteerism	Define smaller jobs to increase volunteerism	2
Educate and market master plan	Use modern methods	2
Neighborhood level works		1
Have “alderman-like” structure	Representing parts of town (instead of selectmen)	1
Better use of special assessment		1
More events	On the Town Common	1
Community gatherings		1
Polling of town residents’ needs		1
Outreach to civic groups		1
Fourth of July table		1
Student involvement		1
Benchmarking		1
Build subcommittee of selected groups		1
Lobby Selectmen		1
Block Parties		1
Effective Master Plan		1
Stricter Zoning Ordinance		1
Cross generation participation		1
Broad based tax		1
Better communication on zoning warrants		1
Comprehensive facility assessment		1
Growth control		1
Engage people’s talents		1

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7. "If you could do one thing to improve Amherst, what would it be?"

<b>Response</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b># of group s</b>	<b># of dots<sup>3</sup></b>
Bring back Town Meeting		2	32
Conserve open space	<i>Buy open space Maybe even all of it Super size conservation efforts</i>	3	26
Bike/foot paths	<i>Develop a system of trails Sidewalks Non-motorized infrastructure</i>	3	23
Build a recreation center	<i>Sports facility</i>	2	19
Preserve heritage	<i>Historical nature</i>	2	14
Stricter zoning ordinances		1	14
Build a classic diner adjacent to the Village Green		1	12
Stricter commercial design standards		1	11
Greater community involvement	<i>Volunteer for boards/commissions</i>	2	10
Provide Affordable housing		2	10
Manage growth	<i>Increase lot sizes</i>	2	9
Resolve elementary school problem		1	9
Slow down traffic		1	6
Road maintenance		1	6
More activities for children		1	5
Introduce S.T.A.R. program	<i>Tax relief for seniors</i>	1	5
More community gatherings		1	4
Decrease lot size in appropriate areas	<i>Increase smart growth incentives</i>	1	4
Commitment to diverse after school programming		1	3
Develop a more distinct identity		1	2
Safer roads for pedestrians		1	2
Put power lines underground		1	2
Improve marketing of community opportunities and events		1	2
Elderly services	<i>Housing and transportation</i>	1	1

<sup>3</sup> All participants were asked to respond to this question. Once all group members had contributed their ideas, each participant was given 5 dots and asked to get up from their seats and "vote" on which they felt was most important by placing the dots next to the words on the large pads. Each participant was requested to use all of their dots, but instructed not to place any more than 3 dots on any one item.

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**DETAILED DOCUMENTATION OF EACH  
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION**

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**GROUP 1**

**Master Plan Visioning**

**Participants in this group:**

George Bower, Steve Borjolie, Marti Warren, Bob Petrocelli, Helen Rowe, Cindy Willett, Brian Dillon, Rich Hart, Anne Logan, Nancy Head, Porter Dodge, Andy Ouellette, Cheryl Sauvegneau, Sally Wilkins, and 2 others.

**Moderator:** Noel Ward

**Q1: Favorite Things**

Sense of community/small community feel (4)  
Small rural nature/Natural beauty (8)  
Openness / variety of open space / *Not* cookie cutter (except for developments) (2)  
Need to preserve Village (3)  
Trees and Tree-shaded country roads (tree tunnels) (5)  
Schools / schools that attract new residents (12)  
Sense of development being curtailed/land use planning/concern for beauty of town  
Environmental efforts / conservation land (Joe English, PMEC) (4)  
Family focus> people> children (3)  
Volunteerism (7)  
Architecture / historical aesthetics (1)  
Youth activities  
Quiet (1)  
Wildlife (3)  
Animals in Village (3)  
Public safety agencies (1)  
Activities: July 4th, Tree Lighting, Halloween in Village (1)  
Amherst Citizen of the Year  
Safe feeling (2)  
Spirit of innovation (2)  
Water quality (1)  
Dark night skies (4)  
Sense of pride and history / sense of place (6)  
Demographic variety  
You can fight "city hall"

**Q2: Least favorites**

Road systems  
    Repairs needed (4)  
    Overall layout  
    Speed (4)  
    Rte 101  
    Rte 101A (2)  
    Overall infrastructure

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Poor signage  
Transfer station traffic (2)  
Parking in Village  
Growth rate (7)  
Tax burden /financial structure & lack of revenue stream to relieve it (4)  
Lack of effective safeguards to enforce control of land development (11)  
Clear cutting of land when development is done  
Loss of aesthetics in developments ((7)  
No nice playground for little kids (2)  
Town's name: Lord Jeffrey Amherst advocated eliminating Native Americans via  
smallpox/genocide using infected blankets. (1)  
Limited number of sidewalks, community trails, bike trails (17)  
Commercial development on aquifer (5)  
Maximize tax base while minimizing growth/expansion  
No recreational center / skate park (10)  
No central information board (1)  
No trash pickup

**Q3: Brainstorm--what describes Amherst?**

American flag  
Old New England colonial character  
Traditional Holiday spirit (July 4th, Memorial Day, Tree Lighting)  
Rural beauty  
Community pride  
Yankee  
School & rec athletic programs  
Moulton's  
The Village  
Library  
Joe English / PMEC  
Garden Club  
Congregational church  
Stone walls  
Picket fences  
Wetlands

**NOT Amherst character**

Route 101A  
Cookie cutter developments  
Large trucks going through the Village  
Lack of cultural diversity  
Technically challenged: weak internet infrastructure  
Crime  
Warped demographic: Lots of older people & young families, less in middle.

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**WISH LIST:**

Boys & Girls club  
Rec / athletic center  
Community center  
Parks  
Biking and walking trails  
Baboosic Lake used more beyond summer boating  
Winter Pond for skating/ hockey\

**Q 5. Obstacles to Wish List**

Lack of community commitment  
Zoning  
Available land  
Money  
Lack of consensus  
Availability of citizen time  
Apathy  
No plan / road map  
Transitional population (stay 3-4 years then move)

**Q 6. Strategies for getting there**

Engage peoples' talents  
Volunteerism  
Neighborhood level works  
Get involved  
Have "alderman-like" structure (representing parts of town) instead of selectmen  
Amherst Talks (web site)  
Better use of special assessment

**Q7. One thing to improve Amherst**

Bring back Town Meeting (23)  
Build rec center (13)  
Resolve elementary school problem (9)  
Preserve heritage (8)  
Buy open space (maybe even all of it) (7)  
Slow down traffic (6)  
Greater community involvement (6)  
Bike / foot paths (5)

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**GROUP 2**

Master Plan Visioning Workshop  
March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007  
Lime Green Room  
Deirdre Rogusky

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1. What are your favorite things about Amherst?

- a. Feeling around village (5)
- b. Family oriented (6)
- c. Likes neighborhood
- d. Fourth of July (3)
- e. History of Amherst (3)
- f. People vary genuine
- g. Working livable village
- h. School System (9)
- i. Community feel, warm (4)
- j. Thoughtfulness of people
- k. People preserving community
- l. Library (3)
- m. Loves the dump, Swap shop (3)
- n. Loves the sense of community
- o. Preserving rural character (5)
- p. Feel safe in the community
- q. Small town America (2)
- r. Music and Theater

2. What are your least favorite things about Amherst?

- a. Overdevelopment of 101A/visual pollution (7)

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- b. Streets are not bike friendly
  - c. Narrow streets
  - d. Dog walkers are not easily seen (1)
  - e. Road conditions (5)
  - f. Current management of Lindabury Orchard
  - g. Traffic on 101 (5)
  - h. Need a better sense of community in the town (3)
  - i. Upkeep of infrastructure (4)
  - j. More people need to get involved (5)
  - k. Cemetery Field
  - l. Late night/delayed plowing
  - m. Generational divide (4)
  - n. Property/School Tax (8)
3. What words and/or images would you use to describe Amherst's character? (Note: We had no don'ts)
- a. Friendly
  - b. Fourth of July
  - c. Patriotic
  - d. Historical
  - e. Town Meeting
  - f. Patrician
  - g. Changing
  - h. Thoughtful
  - i. Very Caring
  - j. Complacent
4. Think about other towns you have visited and share some ideas you think could be



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relevant to making Amherst a better place to live.

- a. More pedestrian and bike friendly
  - b. Free concerts to build a stronger sense of community
  - c. Shoulder improvements for biking, walking, etc...
  - d. Greenways
  - e. Non-auto travel lanes to connect zones
  - f. Better recreation/more fields/playgrounds
  - g. Skate park
  - h. Structures for recreation
  - i. Need parks with trees
  - j. Better utilization of town common
5. What are some potential obstacles to positive change as you see them?
- a. Voters lack of participation
  - b. Money
  - c. Bureaucracy
  - d. Vendor license to use town common
  - e. Consensus
  - f. Lack of land within 5 mile radius of center
  - g. Lack of vested interest
  - h. Lack of commercial zone
  - i. Residential transients
  - j. Property taxes/regressive
  - k. "People not picking up what others are putting down" (people not understanding each other)
  - l. School Taxes
  - m. Resistance to change

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- n. People's busy schedules
6. What are some strategies for getting "there"?
- a. More events on the town common
  - b. Community gatherings
  - c. Polling of town's resident's needs
  - d. Outreach to civic groups
  - e. Fourth of July table
  - f. Student involvement
  - g. Benchmarking
  - h. Build subcommittee of selected groups
  - i. Lobby Selectmen
  - j. Block Parties
7. If you could do one thing to improve Amherst, what would it be?
- a. Develop a system of trails for mixed uses (10)
  - b. Buy more open space (10)
  - c. Sidewalks
  - d. Introduce S.T.A.R. program to Amherst (5)
  - e. Affordable housing (3)
  - f. Put power lines underground (2)
  - g. More activities for children (5)
  - h. More community gatherings (4)
  - i. Elderly housing/Elderly Transportation (1)

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**GROUP 3**

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**1) Favorite Things About Amherst**

1. Village-old look and feel (1 dot)
2. Commercial out of town center (1 dot)
3. Rural nature of zoning. (11 dots)
4. Safe – Life quality (3 dots)
5. Conservation of land and access (8 dots)
6. Wildlife
7. Old features (1 dot)
8. School quality (6 dots)
9. Low population (6 dots)
10. Historic character
11. Spirit of community (6 dots)
12. Volunteerism (2 dots)
13. Souhegan River
14. Recreation usability (5 dots)
15. Library (4 dots)

**2) Least Favorite things about Amherst**

1. Road condition (1 dot)
2. Taxes too high (11 dots)
3. Recreation facilities
4. Traffic 101 & 101A uncoordinated traffic lights (2 dots)

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5. Lack of support for recreation facilities (3 dots)
6. Substance abuse by kids (2 dots)
7. Cell towers that look like trees
8. Pedestrian unfriendly roads (8 dots)
9. Senior Services are not sufficient (4 dots)
10. Lack of voter support for schools re: functional & physical depreciation (3 dots)
11. Uncertain about 101 Future (1 dot)
12. Lack of development standards for 101A (8 dots)
13. Too much commercial development on 101A (3 dots)
14. Tension between Historical character and town center improvements (3 dots)
15. Taxes displacing fixed income residents. (1 dot)
16. High density development – PRD's
17. Lack of water resource protection. (4 dots)
18. Too much residential development (7 dots)

**3. Word or images that describe Amherst Character**

1. Do
  - Colonial
  - Trails with the smell of pinewood
  - Historical
  - Rural
  - Town's People
  - 4<sup>th</sup> of July
  - Town Dump
  - Village Green
  - Moultons
  - Souhegan River
  - Greenway

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- Norman Rockwell
- Lack of dense development
- Hot air balloons

2. Don't

- Cosmopolitan
- Crime
- Pollution
- Big box stores
- Sound pollution

4. **Other Ideas to Bring to Amherst**

- Gateway (into town)
- Band Stand
- Community Center
- Greenway – Multi Mode (bikes, pedestrians and maybe horses—nothing motorized)
- Community meeting place in town center.
- Multi use recreation facility
- Brick paving of town center walkways
- More ascetic development of commercial development

5. **Obstacles to Positive Change**

- Cost
- Lack of state tax policy
  - no broad base tax
  - reliance on property tax
- Private Property Rights
- Developer Pressure
- Desire for Revenue thru development
- Unwilling to Tax and Spend
- Zoning as written to control commercial development

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- Competing self interests and individual agendas
- Apathy

**6. Strategies for getting “there”**

- Effective Master Plan
- Stricter Zoning Ordinance
- Educate and market master plan
- Continue website interaction
- Cross generation participation

**7. One Thing to Improve Amherst**

- Stricter Zoning Ordinances (14 dots)
- Sports facility – Recreational Plan (6 dots)
- Preserve Historical nature of Town (6 dots)
- Develop a more distinct identify. (2 dots)
- Stricter commercial design standards (11 dots)
- Safer roads for pedestrians (2 dots)
- Super size conservation efforts. (9 dots)
- Better trail infrastructure non-motorized. (8 dots)
- Road Maintenance. (6 dots)

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**GROUP 4**

Orange Group Report from Visioning AMP meeting :  
Marilyn Peterman- facilitator

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Question 1: What are your favorite things about Amherst that should be preserved? \*  
Directions for using dots incorrect: started with only 3 different item. Corrected to use other two in any area. Causing a slight skew.

1. Historic District (5)
2. Farm & Agricultural Land (5)
3. Low traffic volumes on rural roads (1)
4. The Library (town resource and community hub) (6)
5. Up to date Fire Dept. (1)
6. Good Schools (5)
7. Good Recreation Dept (5)
8. Community TV (1)
9. Larger lots (6)
10. Separation of residential and commercial areas (11)
11. Cemetary Fields & Playground (0)
12. Moulton's (2)

Question 2: Least favorite things about Amherst?

1. Hunting and residential conflicts (3)
2. Cost of residency (9)
3. Overbuilding on 101A (1)
4. Less driving to school ( too many buses) (3)
5. Poor Road conditions (3)
6. 5<sup>th</sup> grades at the middle school (3)
7. Lack of impact fees (5)
8. Trucks rolling through town (2)
9. Lack of speed enforcement (0)
10. Quality of education ((0)
11. Lack of environmental protections; preservation (0)
12. Lack of public transportation (1)
13. Lack of diversity (6)
14. Lack of opportunity for younger adults; jobs; housing (5)
15. Better Trail connections(1)

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- 3A. What words or images describe Amherst's character?
1. Mixed use in the village
  2. rural villages ("organic development-Gorden's term)
  3. farms
  4. local businesses
  5. "Norman Rockwell" community-typified by activities on the Village Green; 4<sup>th</sup> of July, farmer's market, tree lighting, Halloween
  6. easy access to recreation
  7. "open" community( less regulation and lower costs)
  8. baboosic lake as a part of the community ( used to have a Pavillion, lots of town activities
- 3B: Images of Amherst that do not describe its character and wish did not exist
1. Traffic congestion
  2. Increased Crime
  3. sub-divisions
  4. "Disney-ized" village center
  5. commercialization of 101
  6. limited access on rte 101
4. Think about other town's features that would make Amherst better.
1. Bike paths
  2. basketball courts
  3. community center (especially for elderly and teens)
  4. better swimming and ice skating facilities
  5. marketing and co-ordination of community activities
  6. town meeting
  7. mandated sustainable development
  8. fiber network
  9. community appearance standards
  10. mesh community (wireless)
5. Potential Obstacles to positive change
1. Real Estate interests leading the town
  2. lack of experienced leaders
  3. lack of "mentorship program or opportunities for new generation of leaders
  4. Taxation –distribution of \$'s
  5. voter apathy
  6. time stress
  7. commercial/industrial tax base
  8. lack of consensus
  9. precfonceptions
  10. bedroom community
  11. lack of infrastructure



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- 12. lack of public transportation
- 13. lack of state education support

6. Some Strategies for getting there

- 1. Internet town meeting
- 2. broad based tax
- 3. better communication on zoning warrants
- 4. modern methodology for educating voters
- 5. comprehensive facility assessment
- 6. growth control
- 7. define smaller jobs to increase community volunteerism

7. If you could one thing to improve Amherst, what would it be?

- 1. Bring back town meeting. (9)**
- 2. Manage growth (9)**
- 3. Volunteer for boards /commissions (4)
- 4. Increase lot sizes to 5 ac min., limit potential for growth, leave more open space (0)
- 5. Decrease lot size in appropriate areas; increase incentives for smart growth (4)
- 6. commitment to diverse after school programming (3)
- 7. Build a classic diner adjacent to the Village Green (12)** (commercialize the village my editorial comment)
- 8. Provide affordable housing (7)
- 9. Improve marketing of community opportunities and events (2)